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United Nations Committee Praises California's Housing Element Law in Report on Racial Discrimination

(Sacramento) – The State of California's Housing Element Law was praised by the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in a recent report.

The report, released in March, says "[t]he Committee also notes with satisfaction the *California Housing Element Law* of 1969, which requires each local jurisdiction to adopt a housing element in its general plan to meet the housing needs of all segments of the population, including low-income persons belonging to racial, ethnic and national minorities."

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is responsible for identifying California's housing needs and developing policies to meet those needs. The Department also administers state housing element law, including the review of local general plan housing elements.

"It's an honor to be recognized by the United Nations for the work that the Department of Housing and Community Development does every day to expand safe and affordable housing opportunities and promote strong communities," said Lynn L. Jacobs, Director of HCD. "I'm proud that the State of California is being recognized as an example of leadership in planning for the affordable housing needs of communities around the world."

California law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan containing at least seven elements including housing. The housing element requires "fair share planning" for housing to accommodate all income groups and special needs populations. An effective housing element provides the necessary conditions for preserving and producing an adequate supply of housing including affordable housing. Among other things, the housing element provides an inventory of land adequately zoned or planned to be zoned for housing and a commitment to assist in housing development through regulatory concessions and incentives.

In addition to this fundamental framework, the housing element update process provides a vehicle for establishing and updating housing and land-use strategies reflective of changing needs, resources and conditions. For example, the housing element update process provides a mechanism to adopt new strategies to promote supportive housing, infill, mixed-use, or downtown revitalization.

The recognition by the United Nations comes at time when local governments throughout California have achieved record compliance rates – an all time high rate of 80%. With local government commitment and the leadership of the State in providing significant funding from the Strategic Growth Bonds, California is poised to effectively address its housing, economic, environmental and transportation needs.

The report comes after the formal review of the U.S.'s report to the Committee under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

The CERD is responsible for monitoring global compliance with the 1969 Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, an international treaty that has been ratified by the United States.

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